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CPYRGHT *Civilians Flew U-2s*

In 1956, Francis Gary Powers, an Air Force first lieutenant, accepted a job as a civilian pilot for the Central Intelligence Agency.

He and several other Air Force pilots signed 18-month contracts under which they would be paid \$2,500 a month (Powers and his wife, Barbara, then had a combined income of \$700 a month) to man Operations Overflight, a program under which they would fly the U-2, a new plane capable of greater altitude than any other, along the borders of the Soviet Union and in some cases across Soviet territory.

Late in 1956, Powers was sent to Incirlik Air Force Base, near Adana, in southern Turkey. There were about 100 men in his unit, including six other pilots. They flew from Incirlik and, later, from Lahore and Peshawar, Pakistan. Their planes were equipped with a timed destruct mechanism and the pilots received cyanide tablets, which they were free to use if they chose in the event of capture.

When the 18-month contracts expired in November, 1957, they were renewed on a 12-month basis by many of the pilots. Powers included. Also during 1957, an ejection seat was added to the plane's equipment. The contracts were renewed again in 1959, and the suspicion began to grow among the pilots that the Russians had developed their radar to the point where it was capable of tracking the high-flying U-2.

The only threat that really disturbed the pilots was the SAM, the surface-to-air missile. Eventually, a "granger," a device designed to throw off radar tracking the plane, was installed in the U-2.

Operation Overflight was, of course, a top-secret affair and the situation was more critical than ever in early 1960, as the United States and the Soviet Union prepared for a Summit meeting.

Before the year was half over, Operation Overflight would be on the front pages everywhere and Francis Gary Powers would be world renowned.